
Graduation Rate Technical Manual



Research & Evaluation
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1. Introduction

This document describes the process used in Arizona for computing the four- and five-year graduation rates for schools, local education agencies (LEAs), and the state. The method the Arizona Department of Education uses to calculate graduation rates conforms to the 2008 non-regulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education and to the National Governors Association Compact on State High School Graduation Data.

The Arizona Department of Education computes the graduation rate for every public high school, including charter schools, and LEA with a public high school in the state. It also computes graduation rates for the state as a whole. The source of information for the calculation is the state's longitudinal data system Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). The Arizona Department of Education began using SAIS with the cohort class of 2005. Previously, cohort information was submitted in aggregate form by LEAs to the Department.

The purpose of the graduation rate is to measure the success of Arizona high school students in earning a high school diploma. The graduation rate measures the percentage of students that graduate on time (within four years); and those who take an extra year (within five years). Graduation rates are used in both Arizona's AZ LEARNs accountability evaluations and the federal No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress determinations.

2. Cohort Membership

Membership in a cohort class is established at the time of the student's first enrollment in a high school grade. It is computed on the typical four year expectation for graduation based on the high school grade in which the student is first enrolled. The student's identity with the cohort class remains the same, regardless of student transfers, credits earned, time spent out of Arizona, time spent out of school, and the time necessary for the student to complete requirements for graduation.

For example, a student is considered a member of the cohort of 2011 if:

1. The student enrolled as a 9th grader or Ungraded Secondary (US) for the first time in the 2007-2008 fiscal year.
2. The student enrolled as a 10th grader in the 2008-2009 fiscal year, and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade (9-12, US).
3. The student enrolled as an 11th grader in the 2009-2011 fiscal year, and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade (9-12, US).
4. The student enrolled as a 12th grader in the 2010-2011 fiscal year, and had not previously enrolled in a high school grade (9-12, US).

A student's cohort year is NOT established if the student is enrolled in both a high school and non-high school grade in the same fiscal year.

Students are maintained in the cohort for their last high school of record unless they have transferred to a school granting a high school diploma; have left to be home schooled; or are deceased.

For the five-year graduation rate, students who take the extra year to graduate are attributed to their last school of record, even if that is different than their four-year high school. However, if they do not graduate in that ensuing year, their membership remains with their four-year high school.

When calculating the graduation rates for subgroups, membership in a subgroup depends on the student's information at his last enrollment of record. For example, if a student is an English language learner in 9th grade, exits the program as proficient, and graduates, that student will not be included in the graduation rate of the English Language Learner subgroup. If a student is an English language learner and drops out before graduating, that student will be included in the graduation rate of the English language learner subgroup.

3. Exit and Year-End Codes

The student status used in the graduation rate calculations is based on the exit codes and year-end codes submitted to SAIS by schools. It is the responsibility of schools and LEAs that the data they submit are as accurate as possible.

Students within a cohort are assigned to one of three categories based on their last exit or year-end code in SAIS following the end of their cohort year.

- Students who have graduated (Graduates)
- Students who remain in the cohort but have not graduated (Non-graduates)
- Students who have exited the cohort (Exited Students)

The exit and year-end codes for each of these categories are detailed in the next section. The codes used are consistent across both the four-year and five-year graduation rates.

The following sections provide detailed descriptions of these outcomes. Each student may only have one outcome.

Graduates

Year-end: G

Withdrawal: W7

Summer withdrawal: S7

Graduates are students who have met one of the following requirements to receive a high school diploma:

- Completed a course of study for high school, AND
- Passed all three high school AIMS assessments with or without augmentation;

OR

- Completed an Individual Education Plan (IEP), AND
- Fulfilled the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Students are considered as graduating on time for the four-year graduation rate if they graduate any time prior to September 1st of the following school year. Students are considered as graduating on time for the five-year rate if they graduate by June 30th of the fiscal year following their cohort year. Participation in graduation ceremonies and other activities for seniors is a matter of school policy.

Non-Graduates

Following are the codes for students who are considered as non-graduates.

Attendees

Year-end: A

Attendees are students who met one of the following requirements:

- Did NOT fulfill a course of study whether or not they received passing scores on all of the AIMS tests.
- Did NOT complete an Individual Education Plan (IEP) whether or not they fulfilled the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.
- Turned 22 years of age.
- Attended school as a twelfth grade foreign exchange student (used only in grades 11 or 12).

Attendees have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll. If a student has turned 22 years of age and is withdrawn with either an W6 or S6 code (Aged Out), then they are considered to have exited the cohort.

Completers

Year-end: C

Withdrawal: W13

Summer withdrawal: S13

Completers are students who met one of the following requirements:

- Fulfilled a course of study but DID NOT receive passing scores on all of the AIMS tests, either with or without augmentation.
- Completed an Individual Education Plan (IEP) but DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Completers have concluded their high school education and are NOT expected to re-enroll.

Promoted

Year-end: P

This code is used for students who were promoted to the next grade (used in all grade levels except for grade 12).

Retained

Year-end: R

This code is used for students who were retained in the same grade.

Still Enrolled (AIMS)
Year-end: SA

Students still enrolled (AIMS) are students who will be enrolled for an additional year of high school to continue to pursue a diploma who meet one of the following requirements:

- Fulfilled a course of study but DID NOT receive a passing score on one or more of the AIMS tests
- Completed a course of study but DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Still Enrolled (Course of Study)
Year-end: SC

Students still enrolled (course of study) are students who will be enrolled for an additional year of high school to pursue a diploma who meet one of the following requirements:

- DID NOT fulfill a course of study but DID receive passing scores on all of the AIMS tests
- DID NOT complete a course of study but DID fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Still Enrolled (Met No Requirement)
Year-end: SE

Students still enrolled (met no requirement) are students who will be enrolled in school for an additional year of high school to continue to pursue a diploma who meet one of the following requirements:

- DID NOT fulfill a course of study and DID NOT receive a passing score on the AIMS test
- DID NOT complete a course of study and DID NOT fulfill the AIMS requirement specified in their IEP.

Illness
Withdrawal: W2
Summer withdrawal: S2

This code is used for students who withdraw due to chronic illness. (Withdrawal may not be required. Please refer to the district's chronic illness policy.)

Expelled
Withdrawal: W3
Summer withdrawal: S3

This code is used to withdraw students for expulsion or long term suspension prior to the end of the school year or summer term. The students will not be returning to school.

Status Unknown**Withdrawal: W4****Summer withdrawal: S4**

Status unknown students are students who have more than ten consecutive days of unexcused absences, and whose status is unknown to the school. Attempts should be made to find out what has happened to these students so that other more appropriate codes can be applied. Use the S4 code for students who were enrolled at the end of the prior school year but fail to show at any time during the next school year and whose status or location is unknown to the school. The effective date of withdrawal is the last day of actual attendance.

Dropout**Withdrawal: W5****Summer withdrawal: S5**

Dropouts are students who leave school with the intention of NOT completing the necessary requirements for a high school diploma. The school has confirmed the dropout status by verbal notification or other acceptable method.

This code should be used for students who have intentionally dropped out of school, except for the following reasons:

- Chronic illness
- To receive a GED certificate
- Transfer to a juvenile correctional facility

Detention**Withdrawal: W10****Summer withdrawal: S10**

The detention code is used to withdraw students who have been transferred to a state detention or correctional facility where they are receiving educational services. Verbal notification from a responsible adult is sufficient to apply this code.

GED**Withdrawal: W11****Summer withdrawal: S11**

General Educational Development (GED) students are students who withdraw from school expressly for the purpose of obtaining a GED. Students of high school age must withdraw to take the GED test. Verbal notification at the time of withdrawal is sufficient to apply these codes.

Vocational School**Withdrawal: W12****Summer withdrawal: S12**

This code is used for students who leave school to continue studies at a technical or vocational school. This includes ALL schools or educational programs that DO NOT meet Arizona requirements for obtaining a high school diploma. Verbal notification from a responsible adult is sufficient to apply these codes.

Exited Students

The following are codes for students who are considered as exiting the cohort.

Transferred

Withdrawal: W1

Summer withdrawal:

S1 (out of district) or

S99 (within district)

This code is used for students who withdraw to continue their studies in another school, public or private, which grants an accredited high school diploma. This code also applies to students who have been accepted into an early admission college program so long as they are attending college full-time and working toward an Arizona high school diploma.

An Official Notice of Pupil Withdrawal form must be completed for students who withdraw. To confirm that a student transferred out, a school or LEA must have “official written documentation” that a student has transferred to another school or to an educational program that culminates in the award of a regular high school diploma (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)(1)). Examples of official written documentation include: a request for student records from a receiving public or private high school or an educational program (that culminates in a regular high school diploma); or a written record of a response from an official in the receiving school or program acknowledging the student’s enrollment. A conversation with a parent or neighbor of a student, for instance, would not be considered official written documentation of a transfer.

A school or LEA must have written confirmation that a student has emigrated to another country (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)), but need not obtain official written documentation. For example, if a parent informs a school administrator that the family is leaving the country, the school administrator may document this conversation in writing and include it in the student’s file.

Aged Out

Withdrawal: W6

Summer withdrawal: S6

This code is used to withdraw students who are no longer of school age (22 years).

Deceased

Withdrawal: W8

Summer withdrawal: S8

This code is used to withdraw students who have died while enrolled in the school. A school or LEA must have written confirmation that a student is deceased to apply this code (34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(ii)(B)). A letter from a parent or an obituary is sufficient documentation. Official written documentation of a student’s death, such as a death certificate, is not necessary.

**Home Schooled
Withdrawal: W9
Summer withdrawal: S9**

This code is used for students who withdraw to be taught at home. A.R.S. § 15-802(B)(3) allows a student to be taught at home after certain requirements are met. The parent must file an affidavit with the county school superintendent that the child is attending a regularly organized private or home school. Official written documentation is required to apply this code. Documentation may include a letter of withdrawal or other written confirmation from the parent or guardian, or the affidavit filed with the county school superintendent.

**Not Affecting
Classification**

There are two exit codes for students who transfer within programs (grades) within their school. Since these codes are to be used in concert with enrollment codes into the new program within the school, the following codes are NOT used to determine the classification status of the student.

**Transferred Grade
Withdrawal: WT**

This code is used to transfer students to another grade within the school. If a student is promoted or demoted to another grade within the same school, use the WT withdrawal code to withdraw the student from the grade he or she was enrolled in.

**Transferred Register
Withdrawal: WR**

This code is used to transfer students to another register within the same grade and school.

4. Graduation Rate Calculation

When the graduation rate is calculated, year-end or exit codes are used to place students in the cohort into one of the three categories (graduate, non-graduate, and exited the cohort). Only records that have passed integrity are used in the calculation.

To compute each graduation rate the following formula is used:

$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Graduates}}{\text{Number of Graduates} + \text{Number of Non-Graduates}}$$

Because the graduation rate is a cohort measure, schools should be especially aware that:

1. A school is responsible for students in the non-graduate category even if the students were not enrolled in that school for their graduation year.
2. A student may be a member of a cohort because of an enrollment in the ninth grade in another school regardless of when the student was considered a ninth grade student in their current school.